

ANALYSIS OF THE PRINCIPAL ACTIONS AT THE
SEVENTEENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

I. Cuba

While not a major subject of discussion in the Assembly proceedings, the Cuban crisis had an important fall-out effect. The Cuban affair transformed the atmosphere by impressing members with the decisiveness of our action in exposing Soviet duplicity and readiness to use a satellite for atomic blackmail and by underlining the utility of the United Nations as an instrument of disengagement and as an effective instrument for international mediation.

Cuba demonstrated the three-fold diplomatic utility of the UN: as a forum; as an instrument for mediation and center of political negotiation; and, as an institution willing and able, on short notice, to serve as an inspectorate to police the settlement. In performing these tasks, the United Nations supplemented and complemented the part played by the United States Government and the Organization of American States.

(1) The UN provided us with an unparalleled forum in which to present our case directly to the representatives (in some cases, the Foreign Ministers) of 109 nations and to spotlight Soviet perfidy for world public opinion. Stevenson's speeches of October 23 and October 25 in the Security Council, together with the photographs and our briefings of groups and individual delegations enabled us to present the evidence and argue the justice of our cause. When Zorin was trapped into challenging the evidence as manufactured by CIA Stevenson's reply calling for UN inspectors to proceed to the sites immediately was both dramatic and effective. Our task would have been much more complex if we had had to plead our cause separately with over one hundred foreign ministries. While many of the newer UN members, especially the Africans, were bewildered by the suddenness and gravity of the crisis, their confusion would have been infinitely worse had there been no UN where we could work with them. In addition, the UN provided a forum where the Latin Americans could impress on other UN members and on the SYG their solidarity with us.

(2) The Secretary-General was an effective mediator and the United Nations served as a channel and lubricant for Soviet-American exchanges. The Secretary-General's presence provided a face-saving element, especially for the Soviets and Cubans, and helped keep diplomatic exchanges relatively temperate. At our suggestion, the Secretary-General obtained Soviet agreement to the cooling off formula under which Soviet ships stayed out of the interception area, thus avoiding confrontation and a possible armed clash. This paved the way and allowed time for a direct exchange of messages between the United States and Soviet heads of state which culminated in the agreement of October 27-28. During the early days, the Secretary-General was an effective go-between. Through the Secretary-General we

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were able to make clear to the Soviets what was unacceptable (e.g., inspection of other bases in the Caribbean in return for inspection of Cuba) as well as to work out the "modalities" of an acceptable solution.

(3) The Secretary-General's trip to Havana did not succeed in breaking down Castro's opposition to a UN system of inspection and verification. But it had its uses. Cuba's rejection of the inspection plan converted what would have been an anti-US maneuver into an open flouting of the UN. Khrushchev gave unprecedented agreement to the idea of UN inspection and verification of arms removal on the spot. Because of its wide experience with peace-and-security operations in other parts of the world, the idea of a UN inspectorate in Cuba was wholly credible.

II. Strengthening the United Nations

Developments during the 17th General Assembly served appreciably to strengthen the United Nations as an organization capable of effective action. The appointment of U Thant for a full-term as Secretary-General; the Assembly's acceptance of his recommendations on the geographic allocation of posts in the Secretariat; the extension of the role of the Secretary-General in connection with West New Guinea, South West Africa, the Thai-Cambodia border dispute, the situations in Hungary, Oman and Southern Rhodesia and the Cuban crisis; the Assembly's acceptance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the binding character of the assessments for UNEF and for the Congo military operations; - all served to place the Organization on a sounder operational basis and to strengthen its executive capacity.

Our expectations in supporting Sir Zafrulla Khan of Pakistan for President of the 17th General Assembly were fully realized. Elected by an overwhelming majority, he proved a most effective presiding officer at this session and has set in motion machinery to improve Assembly procedures at subsequent sessions.

Maintenance of the favorable western voting position in the Security Council for the coming year was assured by the election of Norway and thus the retention for at least two more years of this seat on the Council by a Western European.

A. Organization and Procedures

The unconditional appointment of U Thant as Secretary-General until November 3, 1966, was accomplished without difficulty. It was clear from the opening of the General Debate that he enjoyed the overwhelming support of the membership and his stature was increased by his role in the Cuban crisis. While there was some Soviet equivocation and reluctance to proceed with the appointment, this was not maintained when U Thant himself gave the green light and the UAR pressed for action during its

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